

their children. The need is so real and so intense that the District public school choice programs right now in the District are oversubscribed.

Each year, more than 1,000 schoolchildren are wait-listed for the city's magnet programs, those magnet programs which give those unique opportunities for parents to choose, with their kids, the type of program that best suits their individual needs—again, stressing the importance of parental involvement, of matching needs to sources. More than 1,000 children are wait-listed trying to get into those programs.

Right now the District has made more headway than my own State of Tennessee in the development of charter schools. About 15 percent of DC's kids are in charter schools. About 11,500 are in attendance in those charter schools. Once again, because they get that opportunity to better match resources to needs in an overall system that is failing and involves more choice, there is a waiting list of over 1,000 kids in the District for charter schools right now.

Indeed, in this \$40 million there is increased funding for charter schools which are part of the public education system in the District.

Thinking in terms of choice and opportunity scholarships, where individual kids have the opportunity to take resources that are already being spent on their behalf and allowing them to choose the school they could go to, taking that same principle, which is the principle behind, the fundamental power behind, DC choice, one need only to look at when John Walton and Ted Forstmann invested \$2 million in the children's scholarship fund in the District. What happened?

There were 1,000 seats and yet 10,000 kids applied for those 1,000 seats—again, to show the pent-up demand here for greater choice, greater opportunity to choose the type of school that best suits your needs.

On this particular issue, I just want to close and say I do stand with those parents, with those people on those waiting lists, because we have an opportunity to reverse that and to expand the opportunity for families to become involved and kids to have that choice. To me it is nonsensical for us to withhold from them that opportunity when it is within our power to do so, to support each child's right—and it is a basic right—to learn to read and to write and to add and subtract. Basic education for our schoolchildren simply just cannot wait.

ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I want to discuss an encouraging development that most Americans have had no reason, at least initially, to pay attention to. That is what has happened in a country on another continent, the country being Sudan.

This week, several days ago, we received word that the civil war that has raged there for 20 years and has claimed over 2 million lives, lives lost as a product of this civil war, a war that has caused over 5 million families to leave their homes, to be displaced from their homes and have to move to another part of the country—that civil war may be one step closer to ending.

On Tuesday evening the Sudanese rebels and the Khartoum Government reached an agreement on the position and size of their respective armed forces. A formal agreement, since that time, has been signed. This agreement includes three significant breakthroughs: A substantial withdrawal of government forces from the southern region of the country; redeployment of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the SPLA, forces in Khartoum, and third, the formation of an integrated force in the southern Blue Nile region and the Nuba Mountains.

What this typically means is that units are integrated to include troops from each side. That way, each side acts as a check, a check and a balance on each other.

Sudan's Vice President, Osman Ali, says the deal "has paved the way for a comprehensive peace agreement."

The Southern People's Liberation Army, SPLA, leader John Garang, concurs, saying, "With this agreement, the direction and orientation for peace in Sudan is irresponsible."

Clearly, while the agreement is key, there are still significant issues to be resolved. Many issues remain; for example, those regarding power and regarding the whole topic of wealth sharing. But the good news and the encouraging news, the news that brings joy to my heart, having spent so much time in the Sudan personally, is that both sides have looked at extending the cease-fire for 2 additional months, so they can keep talking and keep working toward peace.

A 2-month cease-fire, what does that mean? It means there will be less of the destructive killing, the bombing, the wars, and the battles that go on almost in a routine manner in that part of the world.

I was just in the Sudan about 4 weeks ago. I had the opportunity to work at the mission hospital there and become very intimately acquainted, again not as a Senator but as a doctor, with individuals who have suffered, directly or indirectly, from these war injuries. I go to the Sudan about once a year, plus or minus several months, where in the past I again have had the opportunity to treat people who have been hurt directly in the war, people who have lost their legs from the land mines which have been planted because of that war.

I mentioned part of the agreement applied to the Nuba Mountains. It is now about 4 years ago that I first took a trip to the Nuba Mountains. At that time the United Nations did not allow relief flights to go in that part of the world. The Nuba Mountains have been

neglected in many ways by the international community. I am pleased since we first went in about 4 years ago, the region has opened up to more relief and more transparency and much more of a spotlight, where the world can see the human tragedy that has gone on in that part of the world.

I also mentioned, as part of the agreement, the southern Blue Nile. About 2 years ago I had the opportunity to go to the Blue Nile region. I was in the Blue Nile region actually just a day after a very significant battle that had been fought in that region. It was just the night before. Again, I am delighted that is part of this formation of an integrated force, both in the southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains.

I have had the opportunity to go to Pabong, which is in the oil region, where people have been displaced several years ago. Although this whole wealth sharing is an issue that has to be addressed in the future, it is an issue about which I am very hopeful, now that progress is being made along the lines of increased peace in the Sudan.

Last month I was able to operate and perform surgery in a hospital called Lui Hospitala, a hospital sponsored by the Samaritan's Purse, a faith-based organization here in the United States. When I first started going to that hospital, it was just a schoolhouse. That was about 6 or 7 years ago, 1997. Osama bin Laden had just left, I think about 1996, from the Sudan. When we first went into the area of southern Sudan, it was just a schoolhouse there. The original hospital had land mines around it.

Since that point in time, over the last 6 or 7 years, the land mines have been removed from the old hospital grounds and now 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 patients are seen a year at that particular facility.

Through these experiences, I have had the opportunity of seeing first hand the shattering results of a brutal civil war. President Bush very early on, right after he began office as President, appointed Jack Danforth as a special envoy to that region—again showing the importance to the United States to establish, to promote, and to work for peace in that part of the world.

In the Senate we passed the Sudan Peace Act. We will continue to follow very closely the situation. We will continue to work with the administration, Jack Danforth and President Bush, to support the efforts of the Kenyan mediator, Lazarus Sumbeiywo, to encourage and support this encouraging undertaking.

It is the people of the Sudan—and that's who I spend most of the time with as part of this medical mission work in these clinics and in the treatment and in the doctor-patient relationship—it is the people of Sudan who long the most for the end of this violence.

So this reported progress from this week is something that is very gratifying and pleasing to me and leaves me very optimistic about the future. It is a wonderful part of the world.

THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in a few minutes we will be formally addressing the issue surrounding the Small Business Administration. Thus, I would like to briefly comment on the importance of small business in this country, how the Senate is responding, and to put a little bit of perspective around the importance of the United States doing everything it can—whether it is with the regulatory burden, whether it is in making resources and capital available, or opening up other opportunities for small businesses in this country—how important that is to overall economic growth.

Benjamin Franklin once said: He who would fish must venture his bait. Fortunately, in America we have millions of creative and driven women and men and even teams ready to cast their reels. Fortunately, we have the Small Business Administration ready to help them. You might say that the Small Business Administration is an entrepreneur's bait and tackle shop.

I believe by today's action in a few moments we will be passing the Small Business Administration's 50th Anniversary Reauthorization Act of 2003. This Federal agency has helped more than 20 million Americans start, grow, and expand their businesses. It has become the Government's most effective instrument for economic development. With its help, small companies have grown from a handful of employees into literally thousands. The vitality of the American economy is due in no small part to this agency, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Thanks to today's legislative victory, this pivotal agency will continue working with America's job creators to grow the economy, to boost the economy, and to expand the economy.

Just how important are small business owners? Those innovators create 60 to 80 percent of new jobs nationwide. Sixty to eighty percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. They generate more than 50 percent of the gross domestic product. Small business owners are the heart of the American marketplace, and their contributions to jobs and productivity is its lifeblood.

In my home State of Tennessee, 97.1 percent of all businesses are small businesses. From the year 1999 to the year 2000, Tennessee's small businesses added a net total of 36,806 employees, and 12,000 companies with fewer than 100 workers employed 44.9 percent of the State's nonfarm sector workers. Workers and consumers depend on the small business sector to generate jobs, products, and services. The Small Business Administration helps fuel the creativity and the dynamism of this vital

sector of the economy. And it has been extraordinarily successful.

Take, for example, one restaurant chain, the Outback Steak House. It may come as a surprise to some, but the Outback Steak House does not have its headquarters in Australia. No. It has its headquarters in Tampa, FL. In a little over 10 years, the Outback Steak House has grown from a really small restaurant operation into a dining phenomenon.

In February of 1990, the 2½-year-old company employed approximately 300 people and had a net worth of less than \$2 million. That year, there was an injection from the Small Business Administration. Ten years later, the restaurant chain employs not 300 people but 38,000 people. That \$2 million has grown into revenues of the dizzying amount of \$1.16 billion. The Outback Steak House now has restaurants in 48 States, 13 countries, and places as far away as Seoul and Rio de Janeiro.

Staples is another dazzling example of a Small Business Administration injection of help with a catalytic effect. It started as a single office supply store in Brighton, MA, in 1986. The office supply store is now the country's largest operator of office superstores, employing more than 58,000 people, with annual gross sales of \$11.6 billion. It in turn is offering services and products to small businesses to help them cut their own costs in the hopes that they might also grow to such proportions.

At a macro level during the last 4 fiscal years, just one financing program within the Federal agency has helped create 1.3 million new jobs—newly created jobs all by this one financing program.

Over that same period of time, a second lending program at the agency—a program called the 504 Loan Program—helped create and retain an additional 445,000 jobs.

HUBZone is another program that has been a job creator. In the last 2 years, this program which targets severely economically distressed areas, has helped create over 30,000 new jobs.

These are just a few of the examples—a smattering—of the programs at the SBA that have helped and worked so effectively to add new jobs to the economy. The SBA, it should be said, is just one of the many efforts that are made by this body and by our Government to support job creative policies.

We think simply back to the 2003 Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Act. We provided 23 million small business owners with tax cuts averaging, through that one bill, \$2,200 each. In fact, small businesses received 80 percent of the benefits of the reduction in the top marginal tax rate. That 2003 Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Act quadrupled the amount that small businesses can expense for new capital investments, and that in turn will lead to new investment in technology, in machinery, and new investments in equipment.

This legislation is yet another example of this body, our Government,

working with the President to create jobs and economic growth. Together with the Small Business Administration reauthorization, these pro-growth policies—these policies that create jobs and grow the economy—will increase productivity and make every consumer's dollar go further.

Remington Electric Shaver magnate and pitchman Victor Kiam once observed:

Entrepreneurs are simply those who understand that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity, and are able to turn both to their advantage.

I think with the passage of this bill we can include ourselves—this body—in that description as well.

I applaud my colleagues for supporting the Small Business Administration, which in turn will reach out in support of America's most important job creators, the small business owner.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this evening at sundown, Jews around the world will gather to begin their observance of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and the beginning of the high holidays.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which will be observed over the next 10 days, are the most significant of all Jewish holidays. They are a time for celebration. They are a time for thanksgiving. They are a time for family. They are a time of reflection and of atonement.

Many today all over the world are reflecting over the last year and what that last year has brought, and also to look ahead to that next year with those hopes of what will come over the next 12 months. It is believed that on Rosh Hashanah, God records the destiny of all mankind in the Book of Life.

It is my hope that as we pray, we will do so for the enduring faith in God, and also with the strong, the fervent hope for the strength and the courage and the boldness and also the compassion to see us through these very difficult times for America and the world.

So as we end this week, I would like to wish all of my colleagues and all of those around the world who observe these holidays a very happy and a very healthy and a very sweet new year.

L'shana Toua.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S AGENDA FOR IRAQ

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, as a Member of the Appropriations Committee, having had the opportunity to listen carefully to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld lay out before the Senate and to the American people President Bush's agenda for Iraq, I think I need to share my dismay at some itemization of the President's requests.

We all know, due to the lack of internationalization and the go-it-alone approach in Iraq, that the cost in blood and in money is almost exclusively